

Inspection of Boldon School

New Road, Boldon Colliery, Tyne and Wear NE35 9DZ

Inspection dates:	18 and 19 February 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Boldon School is improving. It is a school that is working in a context that provides many challenges. These include the ongoing impact of the pandemic and a number of changes to leadership in recent years. Consequently, this has hindered the school's plans for improvement, and pupils have not achieved as well as they should. However, recently-appointed leaders are skilled and committed to the school. They have provided stability and increased expectations for pupils' achievement.

The school provides its pupils with high-quality pastoral care. Staff care deeply for pupils, and they support them well. Parents and carers appreciate this. Pupils are safe and happy here. Most pupils behave well. However, some pupils cause disruption, and this impacts on the learning of others.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities to develop their interests and talents. They take part in sports teams and a range of clubs, such as creative writing, first aid and gardening. The 'Pride Collective' is a supportive group for pupils who identify as LGBTQ+ and their allies. Many pupils contributed to the recent school production of 'Shrek' by performing, making the set and assisting front of house.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has a broad curriculum. It is sequenced so that pupils build their knowledge and skills over time. Changes to the curriculum in some areas have increased the level of ambition. The school has high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who typically study the same curriculum as their peers.

The delivery of the curriculum is variable. Some teachers do not check closely enough what gaps pupils have in their knowledge, or what they have forgotten. This limits how effectively these gaps are addressed. Occasionally, learning activities and some teachers' explanations and questions do not secure or promote a deep understanding of the curriculum. As a result, some pupils do not learn and remember the curriculum securely. This is reflected in the public examination results, which are below national averages.

The school has recently begun to strengthen its work to develop reading. Not all pupils get the support they need. As a result, they do not access the curriculum as well as they should. Staff have received limited information and training about how to support pupils with their reading. There are some strategies to encourage reading for pleasure. However, the school's reading culture needs to be developed so that pupils read well, widely and often.

The school identifies pupils with SEND appropriately. It ensures that staff receive sufficient information about how to support pupils with their specific needs. Inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum mean that pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

Clear routines help to ensure that the school is orderly. There are warm relationships between pupils and staff. Some pupils and staff told inspectors that some staff have differing expectations and do not apply the behaviour policy consistently. Although they are increasing, the school uses suspensions to address disruptive behaviour appropriately. In lessons, most pupils concentrate. Some pupils quietly disengage from their work and, at times, staff do not address this. These pupils are not making the progress through the curriculum that they could.

The school is working hard to improve attendance. It has recently increased the number of staff who work with pupils to address the difficulties they face. Despite this, rates of absence remain too high, particularly for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. This restricts their achievement because they miss valuable learning.

The school's personal, social and health education curriculum is carefully sequenced. It helps pupils to learn about important topics, such as online safety, in an age-appropriate way. Pupils are proud that their school is tolerant and welcoming. Pupils enjoy learning on educational visits, such as to cultural sites, universities and sports stadiums. There is a detailed careers programme at the school. This helps pupils to make informed decisions about their next steps.

Leaders have a clear, inclusive vision and plans to improve the school. Staff value the increased focus from leaders on their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always identify pupils' misconceptions and gaps in knowledge. This means some pupils are not learning and remembering the curriculum as well as they could. The school should ensure that teachers check and address gaps in pupils' knowledge, so they learn and remember key knowledge securely over time.
- The school's reading strategy is underdeveloped. As a result, there are some pupils who are not receiving the support they need to be able to access the curriculum securely, and there is further work needed to embed a wider culture of reading throughout the school. The school should ensure that it quickly identifies and supports all weaker readers and ensure that staff are trained to deliver and embed its reading strategy, both for these key pupils and across the school.
- Despite efforts to improve attendance, levels of absence are high, particularly for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. These pupils miss significant learning opportunities, which affects their academic progress and wider development. The

school should develop the way it tracks and analyses attendance and use this to intensify its efforts to improve attendance.

- Some staff do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. When this happens, some pupils disengage from their learning and, in some cases, low level disruption occurs. The school should ensure that all staff receive the support needed to understand and apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108730
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10346269
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,061
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanne Bell
Headteacher	Louise Pippin
Website	www.boldonschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 September 2019

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was appointed in July 2024.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative provisions and five registered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and members of the governing body. Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes from governor meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, information technology and computing, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in a range of other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally during the inspection and spoke with them at social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff formally during the inspection and spoke with them throughout the inspection. Inspectors also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The lead inspector took account of responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Dan McKeating, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lucy Toner-Gowland	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Spurr	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector

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